

## **CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) A method of operating a game being provided to a player on a gaming machine comprising the steps of :

- displaying on the gaming machine a line game comprising symbols organised according to a line game structure;
- operating a meter displayed as at least three different statuses of an evolving symbol displayed according to a predetermined order, said evolving symbol being part of said symbols organised according to said line game structure; and
- triggering a feature on the gaming machine based on at least one of said statuses.

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the meter is used to gather occurrences of (1) a predetermined symbol; (2) a predetermined combination of symbols; (3) an event dependent of a game outcome; or (4) an event independent of a game outcome.

3. (previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the event dependent of the game outcome comprises (1) a winning outcome; (2) a losing outcome; or (3) a prize value.

4. (previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the event independent of the game outcome comprises (1) a spin; (2) an elapsed length of time; (3) a bet value.

5. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein said evolving symbol occurs on a reel, each occurrence of said evolving symbol comprising an Evolving Symbol Unit (ESU).

6. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein all ESUs evolve upon occurrence of an evolution trigger.

7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein the evolution trigger occurs when the meter reaches a predetermined threshold.

8. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein only a portion of the ESUs evolve upon occurrence of an evolution trigger.

9. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the evolution trigger occurs when the meter reaches a predetermined threshold.

10. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the number of evolving ESUs is randomly selected.

11. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the evolving ESUs are randomly selected.

12. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the evolving ESUs are those displayed when the evolution trigger occurs.

13. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein all the evolving ESUs evolve at the same rate.

14. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein each evolving ESU evolves independently.

15. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the feature triggered in the game by said evolving symbol comprises (1) a change in the symbol prize value; (2) a new pay table; (3) a bonus payout; (4) a wild feature; (5) an on-screen bonus; or (6) a second-screen bonus.

16. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the meter is used to gather occurrences of (1) an event dependent of the game outcome; or (2) an event independent of the game outcome, wherein said event dependent of the game outcome comprises (1) a predetermined symbol; (2) a predetermined combination of symbols; (3) a winning outcome; (4) a losing outcome; or (5) a prize value; and said event independent of the game outcome comprises (1) a spin; (2) a length of time; or (3) a bet value.

17. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein said evolving symbol occurs on a reel, each occurrence of said evolving symbol comprising an Evolving Symbol Unit (ESU) and wherein at least one of said ESUs evolve upon occurrence of an evolution trigger.

18. (currently amended) A game apparatus comprising:

- a meter gathering occurrences of a predetermined event;
- a display controller displaying a line game comprising symbols organised according to a game structure and said meter as at least three different statuses of an evolving symbol displayed according to a predetermined order, part of said symbols organised according to said game structure, and thus according at least in part to a value of said meter; and
- an evaluation means triggering a feature in said line game, based on at least one of said statuses.

19. (currently amended) A computer program embodied on a non-transitory\_computer readable medium or on a non-transitory processor-readable memory having codes adapted to, when executed by a computer, cause said computer to:

- gather occurrences of a predetermined event in a meter;

- display a line game comprising symbols organised according to a game structure and said meter as at least three different statuses of an evolving symbol displayed according to a predetermined order, part of said symbols organised according to said game structure; and
- trigger a feature based on at least one of said statuses.

20. (cancelled)

21. (cancelled)

22. (new) The method of claim 1, wherein the meter is for measuring a value and further wherein the at least three statuses depend at least in part on the value of the meter.